



June 2020

Dear Residents

Welcome to the sixth newsletter from the St. Katharine and Wapping Safer Neighbourhood Ward Panel. We are a non-political voluntary group working with the Police Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT), the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) and residents to make our ward a better and safer place in which to live and work.

Since the last newsletter in February 2020, we have found ourselves living in strange times following the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus pandemic. We hope you and your families have kept safe and have received all the support and advice you have needed.

The main issues since the last newsletter have been anti-social behaviour (ASB) developments and efforts to make Shadwell Basin safer by preventing wild swimming and reducing nuisance behaviour.

1) Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Issues

Certain locations have experienced an emerging pattern of ASB and crime. You can help prevent a build-up of problems by remaining vigilant and reporting incidents.

- 1) A new ASB hotspot has been noted in and around Choppins Court, behind the shops on Wapping Lane. This has involved group gatherings, drug dealing and taking, littering and noise.
- 2) Waterside Gardens and Hermitage Memorial Park remain hotspots with similar problems to the Choppins Court area, particularly late at night.
- 3) St Katharines Way (on approach to St Katharine Docks), has been experiencing anti-social behaviour, too, particularly from vehicles late at night.
- 4) There has been an increase in bike thefts in the daytime and at night from gardens and garages. The police are implementing an action plan to tackle the issue.
- 5) There have been reports of individuals knocking on doors late at night asking for money. One man purports to be ex-military and asks for money for a bed for the night. The other is a young woman who bangs on doors very loudly, always late at night and shouts for money. Do not open the doors to unknown individuals, particularly late at night and if threatened call 999.
- 6) Residents report seeing regularly a black Mercedes car registration PN56SSJ. It is driven by a white male who has been reported for reckless and dangerous driving and suspected drug dealing. If you see this car being used illegally, please report immediately to the police on 999.

2) Shadwell Basin

Despite Covid-19 and guidance on social distancing, this area continues to be a problem. Residents often complain about anti-social behaviour and swimming in the basin. Issues have included large group gatherings, barbecues, littering, noise, drug taking and dealing plus the use of inflatables and boats in the water. The dangers presented by underwater obstructions and very cold water below the surface, were demonstrated last year when a swimmer drowned in the basin. This has led to a multi-agency action plan involving Tower Hamlets council, its team of enforcement officers (THEOs) and police. Introduced this Spring, this provides more frequent patrols and uses by-law breaches to disperse and in some cases fine persistent offenders. The three services provide feedback weekly to help focus their resources. The Ward Panel also provides weekly input to this feedback forum. Although the pandemic has had an impact on the resource availability of the THEOs and police, they have switched their patrols to cover the afternoons and evenings up to midnight, as this is when most problems occur.

3) Wapping Bus Gate

The bus gate in Wapping High Street has been operational again with unchanged hours since June 1. We are awaiting the full outcome of a review by Tower Hamlets Mayor John Biggs conducted in May 2020 that looked at traffic numbers and public feedback. At John Biggs's Meet the Mayor online meeting on June 24, at which local residents could ask questions, he said in reply to a ward panel member's question that the bus gate hours of operation would remain unchanged. There would be concessions for local GPs on call and locally-resident Blue Badge holders. Taxis and minicabs would not be exempt.

4) The Highway - Pedestrian Safety

The consultation that TFL is undertaking on a major review of pedestrian safety on The Highway has been delayed from this summer due to Covid-19. TFL staff involved have had to stop working on all non-safety critical construction projects and some staff have been furloughed. The Ward Panel will press for an update on progress.

5) Graffiti

Graffiti is often used to mark out gang territory and drug dealing. Tower Hamlets council aims to remove graffiti as soon as possible but it needs to be told when it appears. If you spot new graffiti, please report the exact location using the link <https://towerhamlets-self.achieveservice.com>

6) Liveable Streets

This Tower Hamlets council programme aims to improve the look and feel of public spaces in the neighbourhood, make it easier, safer and more convenient to get around by foot, bike and public transport. It also aims to reduce rat running, encourage more sustainable journeys and improve air quality and road safety. At the recent Meet the Mayor meeting on June 24, Mayor Biggs said that although work had been delayed by Covid-19 it would still start this summer.

Further information can be found at: www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/liveablestreets

7) The Resident Development Network (RDN) was established by the Ward Panel to link developments and blocks of flats in Wapping as a way of sharing local intelligence. We hope to resume meetings when lockdown measures have been lifted and would encourage developments that have not already joined to contact us at: contact@skw-wardpanel.org

8) Community News Update

Wapping Community Forum (WCF) was established in November 2019 to give a voice to and represent the interests of local residents on issues that are not included in the remit of the Ward Panel. They have many interests and aim to focus on several areas such as LBTH-maintained parks and gardens. We hope to liaise with them when there are issues of common interest. More information can be found at www.wappingcommunityforum.com

9) REPORT ALL CRIME/ ASB THAT YOU WITNESS:

Please report any crime or anti-social behaviour you witness in a timely manner to help the police and council to respond and to map the location and time of persistent problems. Go to our website www.skw-wardpanel.org/report to see the best reporting method to use. Remember, if a crime is in progress phone 999. For ASB phone 101 for the police or use one of the web links provided on our website.